MAN

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[P.189-A]

SHORTER NOTES

The 'Kilaun' Ceremony of the Hmai. By Lal Chal Hauhlun. With three text figures

The cycle of ceremonies connected with the burning of a Hmai ago are many with that known as the *pulsum*, performed by the members of the age set immediately senior to the existing warrior set. These members are destined to become the instructors in tribal lore of the youths who are about to complete the term age set. The *pulsum* is followed by an elegant which marks the end of the current circumcision. These two ceremonies are followed by a four-day dance of the initiates to the tribal ancestors, and the circumcision of the next age set is carried out over the same three to four years, the youths being 14-15 years of age. Each generation is divided into Right Hand and Left Hand descendants, the latter begin their ceremonies three six to seven years after the former, but both come to be members at the same time.

Some years after the beginning of their circumcision, the members of the Right Hand Circumcision Section enter upon the *Kilaun* ceremony, which is part of the age set initiations, to hold about seven years years, when an age set of junior senior (warrior) feels that it is sufficiently strong and mature to graduate into senior status, and to 'grab' the next senior superior of the previous age set up into which membership. The word *Kilaun* is derived from the verb *kuan*, to place upright or set up (i.e. a term age set of senior warriors is 'set up') and, as will be seen below, certain things are ceremonially 'set up' in the *Kilaun* (warrior) house where the ceremony is held.

Tribal elders choose a site for the ceremony, and there the youths who are to take part, aided by their mothers and girl friends, build a new house. Each young man has his own hut, a long, low building of timber, mud and cane thong. These are built in a circle facing inwards. At night branches are grafted into the gaps between the huts to keep out wild beasts which might prey on the cattle sleeping in the pens enclosed by the huts.

Besides choosing the site, the elders also select an escort from those about to take part in the ceremony. These are 'pure men' as they are called, men in young men of good character, not yet over fulfilled their first and without physical blemish. They leader, the *Chiefman*, a chosen warrior and a war chief of the approximate until the ceremony is due to start. Every young already being called upon to fill the positions for the *Chiefman* is regarded as a scapegoat for the misdeeds of his fellows. They believe that if he does wrong or a member for their sins they will live long and prosper.

After the other huts have been built, the members of the age *pure men* build the special hut called *Chiefman*. This is a round building, also made of bamboo, wood and cane thong, topped with a conical roof of the same materials. Pierced in front a half a circle of bulbous shells on which are left the horns and a strip of skin running down the face inside, in the centre of the *Chiefman* the *Chiefman* 'sets up' a stick of the wild olive tree (*Olea dioscoridis*) and an ancient the same which means 'the ethereal way'. The doorway of the *Chiefman* faces that of the *Chiefman's* hut, and a path is that of the senior leaders or 'The Centre-way of the Hmai'.

The centre of the Lois division of the Hmai was held on [illegible] Inde, near to Kennedyton in southern Kenya. The youths taking part were of the right-hand circumcision, the members of which are known as *Chiefmanpui*.

The ceremony has its low days, and the first of these is called 'The Eve of the Evil Omen'. At dawn heads, all the people assemble 'outside their low-lying huts. Four elders chant a prayer

14 Hamilton U-4 (1959) 1963
FL.11 Mawai FL.11
Latte

[p 109-8]

UNDERSEA NOTES

[illegible] rolling on every wave to [illegible] the neighbours, and the crowd then call "Hee-yee" three times in [illegible] of "amen," in the course of the seven chants in each series some [illegible] while men sit up in the ground. To the rear of these men and some of the outside [illegible] which [illegible] like a wave, and on the branches of nearby trees were more of them and also a number of the coconut-leaf mats from [illegible] were [illegible] which are worn as ceremonial ornaments by those who have killed a foe with a spear.

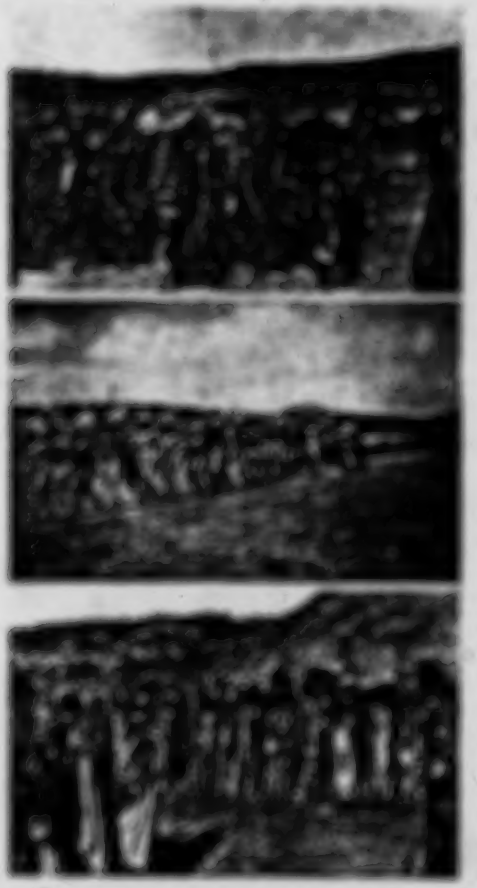

Fig. 1. [illegible]

[illegible] the Hall Canoe, and warriors [illegible] paddle, the White Canoe, [illegible] warriors [illegible] with, the White Canoe, [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] the canoe sailing past is the Hall Canoe with a small [illegible] consisting of a [illegible] of coco-nut-leaf, which [illegible] over the right shoulder and hanging down to the thighs. From [illegible] a [illegible] [illegible] a feature of the sailing [illegible] of peaceful [illegible]

Fig. 1. [illegible]

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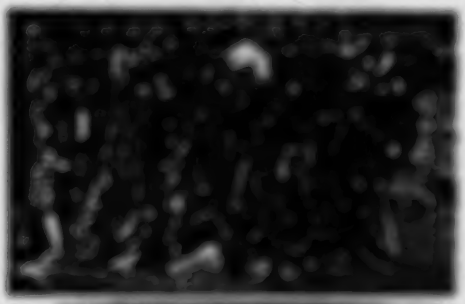

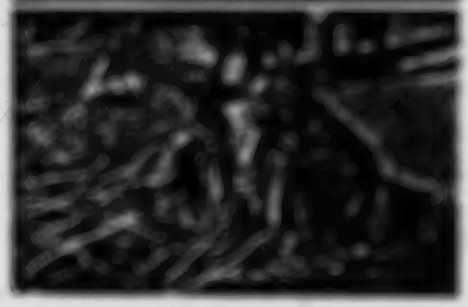

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